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### THE CONDITIONAL IN EVERYDAY ESTONIAN: ITS FORM AND FUNCTIONS

**Abstract.** The paper focuses, first, on the morphological regularities of the conditional in Estonian everyday conversations, and then its functions. In the conditional mood Estonian has forms both with and without personal endings in the 1st and 2nd person singular and 3rd person plural. In addition to those a short or long form of a personal pronoun can occur with the verb form; the pronoun can be also left out. The present article will look at the relations between different forms and functions. Attention will be paid also on which verb stems the conditional marker is added to and how the conditional forms of different core verbs have received a specific lexicalized meaning.

#### 1. Introduction

The earlier treatments of the conditional in the Estonian language have above all focused on its main meanings in written Estonian (Peebo 1957; Peegel 1957; EKG II 34). Most recently, Helle Metslang (1999a; b) has compared the functions of the conditional in Estonian with those of Finnish, Kathy Sarapuu (2003) has looked at the conditional forms in the language of the media. The conditional in Finnish, which, in its use, is rather similar to that in Estonian, has been studied since the doctoral thesis of Emil Nestor Setälä in 1887, although it was then dubbed the conjunctive (see Kauppinen 1999 : 156–162 for an overview of studies on the Finnish conditional).

The present article will look at the use of the conditional in everyday conversations, thus the aim will not be one of treating all the functions but only those characteristic of this register. Everyday conversations are good research material, for greater variation can be assumed in the form variants of spontaneous speech than in a more careful use of the language, closer to standard Estonian. On the other hand everyday conversations do not include certain uses of the conditional linked to formal politeness and the synthetic perfect form (e.g. *olnuks = oleks olnud*), introduced to written Estonian as a novel form proposed by linguists-innovators, which is still a stranger to everyday conversations.

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\* The study was partly supported by the Estonian Science Foundation, Grant No. 5813.

After describing the database, the article will first focus on the form variants of the conditional, then the typical functions of the conditional and, lastly, on which verb stems the conditional marker is most often added to and in which meanings.

### 1.1. The data

We have studied the everyday conversation section of the Corpus of Spoken Estonian at the University of Tartu. The quantitative data are drawn from a selection of 3 to 5-page transcribed extracts from 72 conversations. In this mini-corpus we analyzed 249 instances of the conditional. Most of the conversations have been recorded by the students of the University of Tartu; most conversations take place between students themselves but there are also some older speakers. Conversations touch on various everyday topics: in addition to giving information there are discussions that demonstrate different politeness strategies.

### 1.2. The conditional in Estonian

The conditional is one of the five moods in Estonian. The other four moods are the indicative, imperative, quotative and jussive. Consequently, Estonian has separate grammatical means for giving commands and expressing evidentiality – functions which in some languages are performed by the conditional.

The Estonian conditional marker is *-ks(i)*, which is added to the stem of the verb, e.g. *ole+ks* '(it) would be'. In the 1st and 2nd person singular, and in all persons in the plural, it may be followed by a morpheme indicating the person, e.g. *ole+ksi+n* 'I would be' (*-n* is the marker of the 1st person). It is common to leave the person ending out, e.g. *oleks* 'I/you/he etc. would be'. These parallel forms are considered equally acceptable in Standard Estonian. The conditional has two tense forms: the present conditional (expresses the present and the future), and the perfect conditional (expresses the past but also perfectivity). The conditional forms are used also in the impersonal (referred to as the passive voice in Finnish), where the active subject remains unspecified.

#### The personal

<i>ma elaksin ~ elaks</i> 'I would live'	<i>me elaksime ~ elaks</i> 'we would live'
<i>sa elaksid ~ elaks</i> 'you (Sg.) would live'	<i>te elaksite ~ elaks</i> 'you (Pl.) would live'
<i>ta elaks</i> 'he/she would live'	<i>nad elaksid ~ elaks</i> 'they would live'
	<i>ei elaks</i> 'would not live'
<i>ma oleksin/oleks elanud</i> ~ <i>elanuks/elanuksin</i> 'I would have lived'	<i>me oleksime/oleks elanud ~</i> <i>elanuks/elanuksime</i> 'we would have lived'
<i>sa oleksid/oleks elanud</i> ~ <i>elanuks/elanuksid</i> 'you (Sg.) would have lived'	<i>te oleksite/oleks elanud ~</i> <i>elanuks/elanuksite</i> 'you (Pl.) would have lived'
<i>ta oleks elanud ~ elanuks</i> 'he/she would have lived'	<i>nad oleksid/oleks elanud ~ elanuksid</i> 'they would have lived'
	<i>ei oleks elanud</i> 'would not have lived'

The impersonal

<i>elataks</i> 'someone would live'	<i>ei elataks</i> 'someone would not live'
<i>oleks elatud</i>	<i>ei oleks elatud</i>
'someone would have lived'	'someone would not have lived'

**2. The conditional in everyday conversations: expressing the category of person**

In Estonian all persons in affirmative except the 3rd person singular have a short and a long form of the conditional. The short form is the same for all persons. Negative forms in contemporary Estonian lack personal endings. Previous studies have shown that the short forms (without a personal ending) tend to be used in situations in which the speaker wishes to avoid mentioning the person (e.g., in cases in which the speaker is not sure whether the more polite address form *teie* or the informal *sina* should be used; Erelt 1990; Keevallik 1999).

Table 1 gives an overview of the variant use of short and long conditional forms in the material studied in this paper.

Table 1

The distribution of conditional forms by person

Person	Short forms	Long forms	Examples of forms with conjugational endings
Sg1	58	3	<i>ma tahaksin</i> 'I would want'
Sg2	10	7	<i>sa peaksid</i> 'you should'
Sg3	69	–	
Pl1	27	1	<i>me viskaksime</i> 'we would throw'
Pl2	1	5	<i>te võiksite</i> 'you could'
Pl3	10	5	<i>nad oleksid</i> 'they would be'
Undistinguished	32	–	
Neg	21	–	

The data in Table 1 show that in everyday conversations:

1. Conditional forms with personal endings are used frequently only in the 2nd person (both in the singular and in the plural).
2. The plural marker *-d* is to a lesser extent applied in the forms of the 3rd person plural.
3. There are very few instances of personal endings in the 1st person (both singular and plural).
4. As regards the category of person, the undistinguished cases of short conditional forms form an interesting group because it is impossible to say which person such uses refer to. On these occasions the speaker expresses a wish that the activity expressed by the verb should take place in the future. Whether this utterance is interpreted as a wish, proposal or as a request to abstain from hindering something depends entirely on the pragmatic context. The subjectless verb-initial sentence type is characteristic of optatives. In this respect the subjectless conditional is imperative (Bybee 1994; Kauppinen 1999 : 187 on Finnish, etc.). According to the category of person such conditional forms are similar to the impersonal; as in the impersonal the agent is unexpressed, although he/she may be known to the speaker. The

studied material did not include any impersonal conditional forms. These forms are probably rare and their use is limited to the instances of frame interpretation. The further analysis will look at subjectless forms more closely according to their functions in everyday conversations.

Our data show that the long forms are always preceded by pronouns, i.e. the use of forms with a personal ending represents a case of double marking rather than an indication of the person. The long forms appear especially in the present. There was only one instance of a long form in the perfect conditional: *sa oleksid saand* 'you would have got'. As *you* in this sentence is used a generic meaning, it may show a specific pattern of usage.

In addition to the variation in short and long conditional forms, there is also variation in the form of a personal pronoun. The personal pronoun may be short (*ma, sa, ta, me, te, nad*) or long (*mina, sina, tema, meie, teie, nemad*) or it may be left out altogether. The difference in the use of short and long pronouns in Estonian in the subject position is conditioned above all by pragmatic reasons: the longer forms are used to emphasize opposition and contrast (see Pool 1999; R. Pajusalu 2004). Table 2 provides an overview of the use of pronouns with conditional forms.

Table 2

The use of pronouns with verb forms without personal endings

Person	Short pronoun immediately before the verb (e.g. <i>ma + oleks</i> )	Long pronoun immediately before the verb (e.g. <i>mina + oleks</i> )	Pronoun earlier in the utterance	No overt reference to person in the discourse
Sg1 Aff	15	8	5	30
Sg1 Neg	1	2	2	2
Sg2 Aff	3	–	1	6
Sg2 Neg	1	–	–	–
Sg3 Aff	13	–	21	35
Sg3 Neg	4	–	6	1
Pl1 Aff	5	–	4	18
Pl1 Neg	–	–	–	–
Pl2 Aff	–	–	–	1
Pl2 Neg	–	–	–	–
Pl3 Aff	2	–	1	7
Pl3 Neg	–	–	1	1

There are numerous instances of a short pronoun immediately preceding a conditional form, as in *ma=oleks* 'I'd be', *sa=peaks* 'you should'. Prosodically, such forms would be classified as one word. Pronouns tend to be used in negative statements (this is probably a more general tendency as negative verb forms in Estonian do not mark the person). A long pronoun occurred in the 1st-person forms, mostly with the verb *tahtma* 'to want': *mina tahaks* 'I would want', *mina ei tahaks* 'I would not want'. The use of a long form usually indicates the fact that the speaker opposes him- or herself to someone else.

### 3. The functions of the conditional in everyday conversations

The meanings of the conditional (at least in Finnish and Estonian) are divided into two big groups that, according to A. Kauppinen (1998) and H. Metslang (1999), may be considered as two different interpretations. The

*f r a m e i n t e r p r e t a t i o n* is used when the situation expressed in the utterance is placed in a conditional situation (Metslang 1999a : 49), in which, according to the meaning of the expression, the described event belongs to an unreal world, i.e. it remains hypothetical. In case of the *i n t e n t i o n a l i n t e r p r e t a t i o n* the conditional expresses the speaker's wish and above all conveys pragmatic information about the type of the speech act (wish, request, etc.). In this case, the conditional also often serves to encode the politeness aspect of the situation. Analyses of everyday conversations showed that it is not always easy to differentiate between the two types, which, however, are clearly there as the main variants. Now we will look at the main function types of the conditional that occurred in our data. The aim is not to create a new list of the functions of the conditional but to present the most typical uses of the conditional in everyday conversations.

### **3.1. The frame interpretation or the irreality of the event**

This function often occurs in the *kui... siis* 'if..., then' construction, but in everyday conversations this construction is not so frequent. The condition, based on which the event could have taken place, is often expressed by means of the general context. The meanings of the conditional forms depend on whether the latter occur in the main or subordinate clauses. Although in spoken language the main and subordinate clause are sometimes difficult to identify, they are still there as a syntactic phenomenon.

#### **3.1.1. The main clause**

##### **3.1.1.1. An unreal event in the past**

This group includes utterances which have a verb in the conditional past, referring to an event that has not taken place in reality. The negative conditional form thus refers to an event that has actually taken place. Hence the meaning of the conditional here is often counterfactual. Yet, unlike the negative indicative, which also implies that something has not taken place, it encodes the additional meaning of a theoretical possibility of the event taking place. The use of the conditional makes the listener search the context for the condition in the case of which the event would have been possible. Often an evaluation about whether the potential event would have been positive or negative is added to this in the context. If the conditional was replaced with the Indicative, the sentence would become ungrammatical or its meaning change. Example 1 expresses a regret that the bombed house has not been restored. The use of the conditional implies the meaning that this was not done and there is no stylish house anymore. The conditional makes the listener look for a general evaluation of the situation: it becomes clear that the speaker is dissatisfied with the house under discussion not having been restored.

- (1) L: *oi jumal. (.) ja see seisis kaua aega oli kasutamiskõlbulik kus= o l e k s v õ i - n u d taastada* 'gosh... and it stood there for a long time, it was useable... it c o u l d h a v e b e e n restored'  
Le: *s hakkasid (.) lõhkuma* 'they started to tear it down'

L: *idioot laskis A- Asti näol tahtis nisukest kasti siia. (1.20) se o l e k s i k k a  
stiilne maja o l n d (.) ja ilus (1.05)* 'the idiot let the A- Asti wanted an  
ugly box like that here. (1.20) it w o u l d h a v e b e e n a stylish house  
(.) and beautiful' (1.05)

Sometimes the conditional has the meaning of an Avertive, i.e. the event described would nearly have taken place but something stopped it and it failed. Such utterances often include a lexical reference to the 'almost-happening' (for example the adverbs *äärepealt*, *peaaegu*, etc.), but example 2 does not include such reference and only the conditional carries the meaning 'nearly but not really'.

(2) *ah (.) tantsisin akrobaatilist tantsu=ja (1.2) (-) (1.0) siis Heiki vist kuidagi, ta ei  
püüdnud mind kinni või viimasel hetkel nagu võttis minu kinni=et=ma= o l e k s =muidu  
(.) hooga nagu vastu aknalauda või kuskile m a a n d u n u d* 'well... I danced  
an acrobatic dance and... then Heiki somehow... he did not catch me or at the  
last minute he sort of grabbed me... because otherwise I w o u l d h a v e  
then c r a s h e d into the windowsill or somewhere'

### 3.1.1.2. An unreal event in the present and in the future

In case of frame interpretation the present forms of the conditional express events that on a certain condition could take place or would definitely take place. In example 3 one of the speakers claims that she could not study like that, the other claiming the she could. The conditional shows that neither of them studies in such a way.

(3) A: *mõelda aga aga mina mina {tead vist} ei s u u d a k s niimodi et noh ma õpin  
mingiks (1.2) lihtsalt. õpin* 'to think only, I I (you know) c o u l d never do  
that, well, that I'd simply study for... just study'  
B: *aga mina vist s u u d a k s küll* 'but I probably c o u l d'

Replacing the conditional in the present with the indicative will not always change the meaning of the sentence (as the case was in the previous group). For instance, if the context shows that the activity would take place in the future, its unreality is guaranteed already by the pragmatic tense (i.e. the event has not taken place yet). In example 3 the speakers suggest jokingly that there should be a competition of cheap student dishes. The speaker says that s/he would win this competition. If s/he had used the indicative here (*panen selle kinni*), the meaning would not have changed much. Such a use of the conditional is a borderline case verging on intentional interpretation and encodings of politeness, for one of the reasons behind the use of the conditional here lies in the desire to soften the statement uttered.

(4) M: *hehe (.) ei ma arvan et=et v õ i k s selle võistluse nagu algatada, ja mina  
p a n e k s [selle] pruuni* 'huh-huh... no, I think that... that we c o u l d start  
such a competition and I w o u l d win this'  
K: [mhmh]  
M: *mannasupiga kohe kinni* 'instantly with soup of manna'

Clauses starting with the conjunction *nagu* 'as' form a separate group. They have a negative propositional meaning. In example 5 the speaker actually claims that Egon (or is it Triinu herself?) is not abnormal.

- (5) A: *aga? (.) kas te mm Triinu räägib Egonist kogu aeg n a g u mingi ta o l e k s mingi ebanormaalne?* 'but? ... do you... mmm Triinu talks about Egon all the time a s if he w e r e someone abnormal?'

### 3.1.2. The subordinate clause

The conditional forms often occur in the subordinate clause starting with the conjunction *et* 'that'. *et* can be left out in everyday conversations (and probably also elsewhere), but contentwise it is still a complement utterance.

#### 3.1.2.1. Expressing purpose and aim

In this group the conditional is used to express the purpose or the aim of an activity and as such also expresses an unreal activity because the event has not taken place yet. H. Metslang classifies expressing a purpose under the intentional interpretation (1999 : 111). Although it includes a certain intention (expressing the aim), it still expresses an unreal event that takes place if a certain condition is met. The conditional form belongs to the complement utterance starting with the conjunction *et* and is thus a clear-cut grammatical construction. Although the perfect forms were also possible in this group, they did not occur in our data even once because expressing a purpose does not usually form part of narratives.

In example 6 the speaker suggests talking with the flat owner so that the flat owner would start to think that there is a buyer. Without talking he would not do so.

- (6) O: *ei mõtelgu mõtelgu (.) noh mina arvan küll et rääkigu selle papiga keerutagu seal natukene, (.) e t papi nagu h a k k a k s mõtlema tal-on potentsiaalne ostja olemas et=ta=i h a k k a k s nüü tuliselt enam edasi vaatama (.)* 'no: he should think about it... well, I think that he should speak to this old geezer and schmooze him a little so t h a t the old man would start to think that she's got a potential buyer so that he w o u l d n o t s t a r t to looking for one so eagerly'

#### 3.1.2.2. Describing one's thoughts

The conditional is also used as a complement of various verbs with a cognitive meaning. Such usages are often utterances starting with the conjunction *et*, yet *et* can also be left out. The typical context of use is narratives where one talks about one's thoughts as in example 7 where the verb form *ostaks* 'would buy' occurs in the *et* utterance, whereas *oleks* 'would be' does not. Both are connected by the fact that the speaker's thoughts are described, hence the unreality of the events. Although the main clause is in the past, the present tense is usually used to describe one's thoughts (our data did not include other variants), which points to the recapitulative nature of the clause.

- (7) L: *mina ostsin ükskord poest (.) ma mõtsin mul-on (.) õudselt o l e k s vaja hügieenilist huulepulka. (0.5) läksin poodi (0.8) vaatasin=et=noh mingisugune, (1.0) tead kõik on mingid väga imelikud=e t n h, o s t a k s siis selle maasika maitsetelise* 'I once bought from a shop... I thought I w o u l d need terribly a

hygienic lipstick... I went to a shop, looked at which kind, ... you know, all were sort of very strange... t h a t h u h w o u l d b u y t h a t o n e w i t h strawberry flavour'

### 3.2. The intentional interpretation: the functions of the conditional connected with the politeness code

The intentional interpretation in the case of the conditional is above all connected with encoding politeness (especially if we interpret the purpose clauses as frame interpretation the way we have done so far). As the primary meaning of the conditional is actually a 'careful' negation of the proposition (that is, although the negation occurs, there is still a possibility for the event to take place), it has become a means of expressing uncertainty. As in certain situations the politeness code does not allow expression of self-assurance, the conditional is a natural variant of the Indicative. Hence the fact that the utterances in this group would have the same propositional meaning in the indicative and the conditional does not mean negation but merely softens the speech act. In the framework of Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, the conditional relates primarily to negative politeness, aimed at keeping a distance between the speakers. According to Leech's (1983) politeness principle, the maxim of modesty is the most relevant, which in this system is mostly associated with statements and expressions of emotions, but can be also used in requests. The conditional forms used in encoding politeness are all in the present, due to their speech act type, except the reproaches, which by definition belong to the borderline of the frame and intentional interpretations.

#### 3.2.1. Proposals

The present data have most instances of proposals that include the conditional forms. The function of the conditional here is to diminish the intrusiveness of the proposal, to refer to the uncertainty of the speaker (sometimes real and sometimes politeness-induced). Most of them are pragmatically impersonal proposals, i.e., there is nothing in the utterance that says who should perform the activity. The speaker wishes that the event would take place in the future; the role of the listener being cast as one to help the event to occur or to hinder it. Example 8 probably includes what J. Searle (1969) has called the commissive, that is, the speaker tells herself that she should make a phone call. Such a conclusion can only be made when looking at the reaction of the interlocutor (she has a phone card), who will cooperate in the act of calling by letting the speaker know where the card is.

- (8) S: *ei tea kuna Hille tuleb* 'I don't know when Hille is coming'  
P: *ei-t(h)ea. (1.0) p e a k s helistama tädi Juulile. (1.0) homme kuskilt-et* 'don't know... s h o u l d call aunt Juuli... tomorrow from some place...'  
S: *aah minu käes on sinu kaart* 'ahh... I have your card...'

Example 9 describes the planning of an initiation party of freshman students. The speaker L has a good idea but it is totally unclear who could realize it.



- (9) L: *mina mõtlesin näiteks välja mis võiks e rebastele teha* (.) 'I've come up with what we could do with the freshmen'  
 L: *rebased võiks ise panna seda "Elu allikaid" ette lugema ja sis võiks rebaste seast valida* (.) *ä Arvedit või Tuuli ja Poliitsia* (1.0) 'the freshmen could be made to read out loud "Elu allikad" and then an Arved, Tuuli and Poliitsia could be picked out'  
 S: *jess* 'yess'

There are some proposals that have the person expressed. The present data included instances of proposals that were double-marked, i.e., they had both a pronoun and the personal ending. In example 10 the speaker makes a proposal to advertise the shop.

- (10) *mh te peaksite reklaami tegema et teil on kõige odavam* 'you should advertise that it is cheapest here'

### 3.2.2. Wishes and requests

In case of requests the use of the conditional seems to allow the speaker more easily to refuse. As such the conditional belongs to the group of requests in the politeness code in many languages. As the data described included everyday conversations and direct requests scarcely occurred, the typical modal verb constructions in the conditional (for example *Kas te võiksite mulle öelda* 'Could you tell me', *Kas te saaksite mulle ulatada* 'Could you pass me' etc.) were not represented in our data. There were many expressions of wish that included the verb *tahaks*. The wish can be interpreted as a request if the receiver can fulfill it. In example 11 P says that she wants some herbal tea. If S could fulfill her wish, it could also be interpreted as a request.

- (11) P: *aa*. (3.5) *ma teen umale teed*. (0.5) *tahad ka* 'i'll make some tea for myself... would you like some'  
 S: *ei taha*. (1.0) *ma=ju=sõin=ja* (---) 'no, I don't... I just ate'  
 P: *ma tahan nii õudsalt teed*. (0.5) *tahaks tegelikult mingit raviteed aga noh* (1.0) *tegelt Hillel vist* 'I so crave a tea... I would actually want some herbal tea... but Hille should have some'

A wish can be of the type the fulfilling of which is impossible as in example 12, or it is in the power of other people not participating in the conversation as in example 13, in which the speaker wishes her mother-in-law to come for a visit for Christmas. There the conditional cannot be interpreted as a traditional negative politeness strategy, because it does not work as a keeper of distance. However politeness has a role here because the Estonian politeness code (as well as in some other languages) incorporates modesty into one's wishes. A firm expression of one's wish can be considered rude even if no-one could fulfill it.

- (12) R: *'mina ei tea, 'mina ei tahaks 'ema ollagi, ma tahaks 'kohe vana-emaks saada* (.) 'I would not want to be a mother I would want to become a grandmother straight away'  
 M: *miks sa tahaksid 'vanaema olla* (.) 'why would you want to be a granny'  
 (13) H: *ma plaanisin* (.) *ma plaanisin tegelt jõulusid teha niimodi=et noh et=et, ma tahaks noh=et Raimondi ema tulleks meile onju, sest noh, mis-ta mis-*

*asja ta seal Kiviõlis, ta ootab Raimondit nagu haige onju, et-noh Raimond sis koju s õ i d a k s. hh 'I thought... I thought that I'll have Christmas this way... well... I w o u l d l i k e Raimond's mother that she w o u l d c o m e to our place because, you know, she's always waiting for him like crazy so that huh Raimond w o u l d g o there'*

### 3.2.3. Statements

Similarly to softening wishes, statements can also be softened. Statements differ from the speech acts discussed above in this respect that they do not presume action on someone's behalf. But excessive self-assurance in these may also be rude. In some cases it may be difficult to decide whether the uncertainty is real (i.e. the speaker does not know certainly) or the speaker "hides" her knowledge. Some particle-like politeness forms have developed that soften the statements, for example *ma ütleks et* (would say that), *peaks mainima* (should mention), *kuidas ma ütleksin* (how would I put it), *võiks öelda isegi et* (could be said that). In example 14 it is stated that to organize the reunion it is enough when old classmates read their e-mail once a month.

- (14) A: *ega iga päev ei olegi vaja, p i i s a k s kui nad kord kuus vaatavad. (2.5) (---)*  
*mina näiteks ei vaata üldse praegu kas kirju on tulnud võ-i-ole 'it is not necessary every day, it w o u l d b e e n o u g h if they read it once a month... I, for example, I don't look if any e-mails have come or not'*

### 3.2.4. Expressions of reproach and regret

Expressions of reproach and regret concern someone's earlier activities, or, to put more correctly, something that was left undone. In this regard this group has a great deal in common with the functions of the first group of the conditional because also here the event has not actually taken place. As the event happened in the past, the conditional perfect is used. In example 15 M expresses regret over the fact that she should have bought (*oleks pidanud*) something more, the speaker L confirms that in a reproachful manner.

- (15) M: *no loomulikult ma ostsingi sellepärast neid häid asju (.) 'but of course that's why I bought these goodies'*  
L: *et sul oli kõht tühi 'because you were hungry'*  
M: *o l e k s pidanud veel midagi head ostma=aga (1.0) 'I s h o u l d have bought some more of that tasty stuff... but'*  
L: *o l e k s muidugi pidanud (1.0) 'of course you s h o u l d have'*

## 4. The Conditional and core verbs

The conditional forms are distributed unevenly among verb stems. The present dataset included 249 conditional forms in total, the most frequent of them were *oleks* 'would be' (69 times); *peaks* 'should' (36); *tahaks* 'would want' (25); *võiks* 'could' (22). *saaks* 'could' is the next in frequency but it occurs both in the modal and non-modal meanings and does not form a clearly separable combination of the stem and the marker. The frequency of the form *oleks* results from its grammatical functions: all perfect forms are formed by

means of that verb. Other frequent conditional verbs (*peaks*, *tahaks* and *võiks*) are all modal verbs and they have their typical contexts of occurrence. Of course it cannot be excluded that the respective verb form could occur in some other meaning group listed above but it can be seen that in certain speech act types these verbs with the conditional marker form an inseparable whole. In case of such a whole it is impossible to tell what the meaning of the conditional is as opposed to the meaning of the verb itself.

#### 4.1. *peaks* 'should'

*peaks* is the most frequent conditional form of the modal verbs and occurs practically in all meaning groups. Mati Erelt (2001), when describing the grammaticalization of the verb *pidama*, has referred to its epistemic-modal meaning. The present data also include many instances of the form *peaks* expressing probability. In example 16 it is claimed that it is probable that the letter has been received.

- (16) *'kui laupäeva omikul 'posti pani siis ta peaks täna 'kätte=saand olema*  
'if you posted it on Saturday morning, he should have received it today'

It is interesting that in everyday conversations different values of the epistemic modality can combine. In example 17 the speakers discuss cheap recipes; it is said at the beginning that students should (*peaks*) eat that, thus they probably do that and then they do it certainly.

- (17) *et et seda peaks id küll üliõpilased 'kindlasti sööma* 'students should definitely eat that'

*peaks* is quite frequent in proposals. In example 18 the speaker says that birthday pictures should be taken differently (it is a typical impersonal proposal; see 3.2.1, also the example 8).

- (18) *tegelikult peaks neet (.) sünnipäevade pildid tegema nii-et kõik on korraga peal mingi (.) mingi ümber sünnipäevalapse või umbes nimodi mitte ni-et ma pildistan ühest kandist natuke ja teisest kandist natuke=ja* (3.0) 'actually these birthday photos should be taken so... so that... everybody is in the picture... all at once... around the person whose birthday it is... or something like that... not like I take a photo from here and a photo from there... and...'

#### 4.2. *tahaks* 'would (want)'

*tahaks* is more clearly a verb of one speech act type than *peaks*, expressing a softened wish. In the example 19 three different speakers say that they would like to go to Tallinn.

- (19) Kr: *tahaks Tallinasse teatrisse minna* 'I would like to go to the theatre in Tallinn'  
Ke: *mhmh*  
M: *[tahaks]* '(I?) would like'  
Ke: *[metahaks] (.) metahaks kaa* 'we would like it too'

M: *aga Talinas* (.) *tegelikult võiks [selle asemel] et mingeid tobedaid jõulukungitsi nii palju osta* 'but in Tallinn actually instead of buying so many stupid Christmas presents'

Ke: [t a h a k s] '(I?) would like'

M: *võiks* (.) *võiks t(h)eatrisse minna* 'we could go to the theatre'

#### 4.3. *võiks* 'could'

*võiks* is the verb of proposals and wishes. In example 19 above it is difficult to say whether it expresses a wish or a proposal. In example 9 it implies a proposal. In example 20 *võiks* is part of the impersonal proposal.

(20) K: *ei no tühja sest ma loodan et kalapulki võiks teha* 'well, it does not matter I hope that we could make fish fingers'

P: *kalapulki jah* (.) 'yes, fish fingers'

### 5. Conclusion

Like the conditional in many other languages, the Estonian conditional is an abstraction, and its meaning cannot be considered separately from the meanings of the particular verbs on which it is marked. The conditional forms of certain core verbs have developed established pragmatic functions, e.g., the use of *peaks* 'should' in generic proposals or as a marker of epistemic modality, or the use of *tahaks* 'would' to soften wishes.

The short conditional forms without a personal ending allow pragmatic fuzziness as the person referred to becomes clear only in the interaction between the context and the hearer. Such forms are used in proposals avoiding explicit reference to the person who should actually perform the task.

The conditional is used as a politeness device: to soften requests and to reduce the speaker's confidence. Long conditional forms tend to be used with preceding pronouns. Such double-marked forms constitute a special device of conveying certain pragmatic meanings.

### Abbreviations

EKG — M. Erelt, R. Kasik, H. Metslang, H. Rajandi, K. Ross, H. Saari, K. Tael, S. Vare, *Eesti keele grammatika II. Süntaks*. Lisa: kiri, Tallinn 1993.

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#### КОНДИЦИОНАЛИС В РАЗГОВОРНОМ ВАРИАНТЕ ЭСТОНСКОГО ЯЗЫКА: ФОРМА И ФУНКЦИИ

В статье анализируются закономерности форм и функций эстонского кондиционалиса в разговорной речи на базе корпуса устной речи Тартуского университета. Эстонский кондиционалис имеет две параллельные формы, в равной мере допускаемые литературным языком. Во всех личных формах употребляется кондиционалис без личного окончания, в 1-м — 2-м лице единственного числа и в 3-м лице множественного числа возможно присоединение личных окончаний. Как краткую, так и личную форму может сопровождать личное местоимение в краткой или полной форме. Исследование показало, что формы кондиционалиса без окончания и местоимения используются часто для того, чтобы прямо не называть лицо, например, в пожеланиях и приказах. Полная форма кондиционалиса в большинстве случаев употребляется с местоимениями и тем самым маркирована дважды. Некоторые глаголы используются в кондиционалисе особенно часто и по поводу их форм можно говорить о семантическом неразличении основы и показателя, таковы, например, формы *peaks* 'надо бы', *tahaks* 'хотелось бы' и *võiks* 'можно бы'.